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Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	24/4/2011

Albatross around Hadi's neck

IT is definitely a season to demand for political top dogs to step down. Continuing with the trend set in Sarawak where Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud has been called to step down despite leading the state Barisan Nasional to retain the two-thirds majority as well as promising a transition process.

The call for Taib to step down immediately is not only from the opposition but also from some individuals from within the BN.

Prominently taking the lead in asking Taib to step down immediately was Umno and BN Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin. This drew much flak from Sarawak BN.

For one, they felt that it was not Khairy's place to make such a demand, especially after Taib had agreed to the transition and managed the two-thirds victory.

The more blunt of his critics pointed out that he should have adopted such a stand when his father-in-law, fun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, led the BN to a disastrous election in 2008.

Talking about Abdullah, the opposition, too, was of the idea that he should stay on as the prime minister.

It was obvious that there was no altruism in their wanting Abdullah to stay on as they knew he had caused the BN the devastating results, was a liability and if he stayed on, the BN would be punished further.

However, their treatment of Taib is different from that of Abdullah.

Despite having repeatedly and loudly declared Taib is a liability to Sarawak and was going to cause BN's downfall in Sarawak, the opposition are still demanding for him to step down.

By the opposition's and any other



...SUNDAY NOTES

By the opposition's and any other logic, if Taib is such a liability, the longer he stays on, the worse it is for Sarawak BN and that should be to the advantage of the opposition.

BY SHAMSUL AKMAR

logic, if Taib is such a liability, the longer he stays on, the worse it is for Sarawak BN and that should be to the advantage of the opposition.

However, a Sarawak political insider pointed out that if Taib were to step down immediately, there would be a power struggle and that could cause extensive damage to the coalition.

As such, he added, the transition must be put into motion; Taib continuously reminded of it and the BN leadership making sure the commitment for the succession is not compromised.

Amid the demands and debates over Taib's position, Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang joined in the fray.

It was not him demanding Taib's resignation but instead, he was publicly described as a liability to the loose opposition coalition, the pact comprising Pas, Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) and DAP.

It became dramatic because the "attack" on Hadi was sparked by academician Prof Abdul Aziz Bari, who teaches law at the International Islamic University.

Aziz, who never hid his strong leanings towards the opposition, is also perceived to be an Anwarista, a

term used to associate those who staunchly support PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

This led to the perception that Aziz was echoing the sentiments of Anwar said to be getting uncomfortable with the continuous talk of unity government between Umno/BN and Pas.

Hadi is suspiciously viewed to be in favour of the unity government despite his repeated declarations of commitment to the Pakatan Rakyat cause.

In fact, Hadi has been accused, together with a few other top Pas leaders, of favouring cooperation with Umno and they had been simply categorised as the pro-unity government faction.

Opposed to him is the Erdogan (Recep Tayyip Erdogan the Turkish Prime Minister) and said to be a supporter of Anwar) faction which is opposed to any talks or cooperation with Umno/BN towards the establishment of the unity government.

Leader of this faction is Pas' spiritual adviser Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and his blue-eyed boy Husam Musa, an exco member of the Kelantan state government.

Whether Nik Aziz has consciously placed himself as the leader of the



Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud won a two-thirds majority in state elections held recently

Erdogan faction or otherwise, the collision between the factions was averted in the party's 2009 muk-tamar (general assembly) when its biennial election was held.

The party elections are to be held again this June and the unsettled business of 2009 is being regurgitated.

In the previous polls, Hadi was not challenged but given the timing of the "drums" being beaten by Aziz; the former may not be able to avert the collision course this time around.

The question is who is going to take him on.

Husam's name had cropped repeatedly but he had vehemently said he would not challenge Hadi.

Other than him, no other names, at least of some standing, have yet to be mentioned.

Regardless of whether Hadi is challenged or otherwise, Aziz's call-

Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang may be challenged in the coming party elections to be held in June

ing Hadi a liability was enough to raise the spectre of the unity government and has now become the albatross hanging around Hadi's neck.

Hadi may again survive the June party election but the message from the Anwaristas to Pas leaders is very clear — work with Umno/BN or abandon Anwar and they do so at their own peril.

The perception that Pas had compromised much of its Islamist struggle was due to the spread of the Anwaristas' tentacles within.

Down south of Kuala Lumpur, the city-state of Singapore is also holding its general election next month.

The result is very predictable and its strongman, octogenarian Lee Kuan Yew, will defend his Tanjung Pagar seat he first won in May 1955.

And in Nik Aziz, Lee has a fan.